

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SENIOR INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

Introduction

Having been associated with the Senior Intelligence Service (SIS) since its inception in November 1979, and now on the eve of my departure for a new assignment, having served in an administrative capacity for the past three years, I would like to put forth my views, perceptions, and suggestions regarding: (1) Has the SIS fulfilled the intended overall purposes, (2) has it benefited the Agency, (3) have our senior officers benefited from the Program, (4) should there be a formal Agency reappraisal of the entire SIS concept and its component parts, and finally, (5) what are some of the alternatives that might improve or conceivably replace the SIS system?

Background

1. By way of background the SIS resulted from the Carter Administration attempts at Civil Service Reform that came about in 1978. At that time the concepts and principles of the Civil Service Reform Act were ostensibly new to the Federal sector and politically attractive in that the SES, Merit Pay, and Performance Appraisal were the panacea for senior and mid-level Federal work force rejuvenation. The Agency, with Director Turner's encouragement, opted to get on the bandwagon by adopting its form of the SES.

2. At the time of conversion to SIS all supergrade, SPS, EP-5, and EP-4 officers were offered conversion opportunity to the appropriate SIS level, ensuring that their then current rate of pay would be no less than their current status. The election as presented, favored SIS conversion by pointing to the advantages of awards, unlimited leave, potential for advancement, sabbaticals, etc., while, at the same time, identifying the disadvantages of nonconversion, i.e., none of the benefits associated with the SIS. The result was that all officers eligible opted for conversion except one supergrader scheduled for retirement. This approach of offering membership in the SIS met with a degree of dissatisfaction and uncertainty in that it appeared to be a stacked deck for the SIS side of the ledger. It is my opinion that senior Agency management wanted to emulate the SES concept, believed that there were tangible benefits for our senior officers and that it would be ineffective to operate a dual system of SIS and supergrades ergo the all out effort to convince all eligibles to convert. During the ensuing year there were several set-backs that tended to discredit the SIS in the eyes of the membership i.e., the \$50,112.50 pay cap compressed SIS and GS pay whereby senior 15's equated to SIS-1--SIS-5 levels - this condition has prevailed up to the current SIS/GS rates whereby a senior GS-15 earns as much as an SIS-3. Reduction of the bonus percentage by Congress from 50 percent to 20 percent was also an external negative action. Much has been expressed by the membership with regard to how the awards process works in the Agency. Those have-nots are critical of the process in that it is the "old boy network" and some of the have's express concern over why did I get the award, why is it a secret, and so on. Furthermore, membership realization that we classify jobs within the SIS structure versus the SES "Gradeless Society" whereby the population is

predominantly SES 3/4 causes concern. Also our general policy of promotion from GS-15 to SIS-1 versus SES appointment or pay adjustment to a higher SES level causes the belief that we are penalizing our senior officers. This belief is now of greater concern with the lifting of the SIS pay cap to \$67,200. This background is intended to set a framework for my following comments on the system and it should be pointed out that these background observations result from general comments and reactions I have encountered in dealing with SIS members primarily at the SIS-1--SIS-3 levels.

Purposes

Having set the stage, has the SIS fulfilled the intended overall purposes which are:

1. To ensure that senior officer management is of the highest quality and fully responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation.
2. To provide the Director of Central Intelligence with a centralized mechanism through which to develop equitable personnel management policies for senior officers and to direct and monitor their implementation and enforcement.
3. To develop and maintain a highly motivated and competent group of individuals capable of filling senior level positions and to provide the type of quality performance needed for the continued success in fulfilling the DCI's missions and functions.
4. To provide for a compensation system including salaries, benefits and incentives and for other conditions of employment designed to attract and retain highly competent senior officers.
5. To ensure the systematic development of highly competent candidates for entry into the SIS and the continuing development of personnel already members of the SIS.
6. To provide for counselling, training and other assistance for those officers who are not performing to established standards to help them become successful performers.

With regard to purpose number 1 it is uncertain whether the SIS concept has insured the highest quality of senior officer management. The tangible benefits such as awards, unlimited leave, etc. tend to be taken as a "given" after a period of time while motivation, job challenge, intellectual honesty, and dedication are some of the ingredients that foster "high quality" senior management. To identify or instill these qualities or characteristics is no simple task and requires sincere interest on the part of senior management to develop and encourage subordinates to broaden their horizons and to perform at an optimum level. Having accomplished this, compensation and fringe benefits tend to become secondary for the subordinate manager so long as any disparity

is within a reasonable range. The SIS mechanism that should focus senior managers on this problem is the Senior Officer Development Program. The general reaction is that the SODP is a bureaucratic aberration of the SIS and that Career Services are already doing the things prescribed in the SODP, such as training planning, succession planning, rotational assignments, etc. This may serve the purpose at the Career Service level, however, a viable centralized senior officer development program should be considered for those SIS officers having the potential to advance to the Agency management level. It is also of interest to note the increasing number of senior rehired annuitants necessary to fulfill Agency requirements. Does this mean that our succession planning and senior officer development efforts require a new look and should there not be greater emphasis on SIS candidate development at the GS-15 level?

Purpose number 2 specifies a centralized program to enable the DCI/DDCI to direct, monitor and enforce SIS policy. To a large extent this centralized control resembles the same management practices exercised for supergrade officers i.e. the DCI/DDCI approved positions, promotions or any other significant personnel action such as COS assignments, key officer assignments, etc. The advent of SIS is an extension of centralized control in that awards, sabbaticals, and all SIS assignments are approved at the DCI level. In this regard it is questionable as to whether SIS-1—SIS-2 assignments should require approval at the DCI level versus Career Service level.

Purpose number 3 is to develop and maintain a cadre of "highly motivated and competent" group of individuals capable of filling senior level positions. SIS candidate development is solely a Career Service function as the system operates today with varying degrees of emphasis and commitment on the part of Career Service management. In large measure candidate development is achieved through assignment to a specific SIS position with less emphasis on management training in the spheres of planning, budgeting, data processing systems, personnel management, etc. Herein lies a problem, as these officers progress to more senior SIS levels their management responsibility turns from substantive areas to broader resource control. Rotational assignments seem an unsolvable enigma in that fast track officers are not farmed out on rotational assignments and the "out of sight out of mind" syndrome prevails. To some extent rotationals have become more prevalent, however there should be a mechanism to determine whether the rotation contributes to senior officer development. This would be similar to the recently established OP monitoring of officers completing senior schools and their next assignments. The problem here, however, is who is in the best position to determine whether the next assignment is career enhancing - OP or the Career Service? Obviously the Career Service is in the best position to make this judgment. Most importantly, though, is how to develop a highly motivated group of individuals capable of filling senior level positions and to provide the type of quality performance needed for the continued success in fulfilling the DCI's missions and functions. Much has been said on the subject ranging from focusing on morale, dedication and loyalty to making compensation and benefits more attractive at headquarters and overseas. In the near and conceivably long

term, considering the plight of the federal worker with regard to pay freeze, reduced retirement benefits, reduced medical coverage - and all at a higher cost to the employee - internal management attention should focus on motivation of the SIS employee. Here again the emphasis should relate more closely to a meaningful senior officer development program, GS-15 candidate selection and development, insuring that senior positions are structured to permit increased responsibility, encourage innovation, incumbents are held accountable for their actions and that marginal performers are not permitted to stifle or discourage junior SIS managers or specialists.

Purpose number 4, "to provide for a compensation system including salaries, benefits, etc. designed to attract and retain highly competent senior officers," is probably one of the most controversial aspects of the SIS in that it is the most visible and has an immediate dollar impact on the membership. In this area, compensation and benefits should be equitable internally and then equitable with the SES population. Compensation and benefits becomes a very "personal" matter and it is exceedingly difficult to rationalize any pay or benefit package that is perceived to be less than the "outside" world i.e. SES, SFS, etc. Although our percentage of SIS-1--SIS-2 is greater than the rest of government, which is primarily SES-3, SES-4, our percentage of SIS positions to total workforce is higher. Does this imply that our SIS positions are overgraded or are we underpaying our officers in relation to their SES counterparts. In order to set this issue at rest, PMCD or SIS/SS should undertake a study to compare SES/SIS equivalent positions with regard to qualifications, responsibility, etc. This would, if the results are favorable, reenforce any request to OMB for additional SIS ceiling or pay relief. The SIS awards side of the benefits package is another area of membership expressed concern with regard to administration of the bonus system, purpose and timing of awards, impact on morale, do awards motivate a higher level of performance, does the secrecy of the performance award recipients negate the purpose, etc. Unless the award is a measure of specific contribution or performance, i.e. contribution to profit, it is practically impossible to delineate specific criteria that would be viewed by the membership as a fair and equitable method for determining awards. Obviously AWP's and performance standards are not the practical answer in that they are generalized and artificial in relation to specific goals and objectives. The 50 percent , 20 percent rule or any other award quota defeats the real intent of the system in that a "ranking cut off" by the Career Service tends to recognize SIS officers at varying levels of performance in the different Career Services. This system also fails to recognize specific component accomplishment i.e. offices, division or branch level in that awards are germane to the individual PAR and may not be permitted to cascade downward to lower level SIS officers. There are no ready solutions to the problems mentioned above, however the awards system should be studied further to determine its value to the Agency and alternate approaches to the awards concept. Incidentally SIS awards without a "Merit Pay" concept for GS-13--GS-15 would appear to penalize those GS officers that contribute to the awarded accomplishments.

Purpose 5 ensures systematic development of competent candidates and current SIS officers. As previously discussed the primary developmental thrust is related to specific positions or discipline, whereas management training takes the form of OTE or external courses that expound theory and principles. In order to equip mid-level and junior SIS officers for senior managerial positions, it would seem desirable to place greater emphasis on OJT with regard to the various management functions. With regard to rotational assignments or senior school attendance, the Career Service should be required to define the developmental advantages for the officer involved. Individual development plans for the GS-15 candidate and current SIS officers, identifying specific knowledges, skills, abilities that require improvement and training or rotational assignments designed to improve the officer skills should be instituted and monitored at the Career Service level. In the case of the SIS candidate, individual advisors should be appointed to counsel, guide and evaluate their development.

Purpose 6 relates to sub-performers and prescribes counselling and additional training to overcome officer deficiencies. Here again, the Individual Development Plan could be the vehicle for this purpose coupled with the PAR and advice and counsel from an appointed advisor. I am also of the opinion that the 1-year SIS probationary period should be reinstated as it forces the Heads of Career Service to certify the officers' SIS suitability. This certification may have greater credence in view of the new PAR policy.

Has the SIS Benefited the Agency?

With regard to attracting and retaining competent senior officers or contributing to mission accomplishments, the answer is probably no. Cosmetically, it may have enabled us to keep pace with the rest of the Executive Branch in terms of benefits, however, we now appear to be lagging behind with regard to basic compensation. It would appear that expanded or revitalized programs, increased resources and a greater degree of confidence in the Agency's ability to meet new challenge far overrides the reasons for the quality of our management versus the SIS concept.

Have Our SIS Officers Benefited From the SIS Program

Unlimited accrual of annual leave would appear to be the primary advantage, although many junior SIS officers view this as a long term benefit not immediately realized. The Sabbatical Program, a desirable senior officer development feature, has not been utilized except in one instance for a DDI officer. It would seem that this program would be useful to fill gaps in Agency expertise and to develop the individual officer. Stipends and awards receive mixed reviews in that concerns are expressed over "is the recipient a high performer or in a high visibility position? Performance award winner secrecy promotes suspicion as to the criteria and method of determining awards. Senior managers seem more comfortable by not publicizing performance award winners in that it avoids confrontation with the nonrecipient under his supervision. Here again, this would appear to defeat the purpose of the award

in that the senior manager could take this opportunity to counsel the nonrecipient as to why he or she did not receive an award. (The twenty percent limitation should not be used as blanket excuse for this purpose).

Should There be a Reappraisal of the SIS Program

The CSRA prescribes a comprehensive review of the SES after five years of operation. The SIS will have been in operation for four years in November 1983. It is suggested that a task force of SIS officers representing the Career Services, and OP convene to evaluate the SIS and its sub-elements in depth and recommend desired changes in policy with regard to the personnel management of our senior officers. The task force would be similar to the SIS Advisory Committee that never got off the ground.

Alternative Suggestions

1. Consider an SIS compensation system that is an extension of the current Agency pay study.
2. Discontinue the practice of award allocations to the Career Services that all but forces them to recommend twenty percent for awards.
3. Delegate SIS-1--SIS-2 assignment approvals to Heads of Career Service.
4. Publicize Performance Award recipients.
5. Use sabbaticals more extensively as a senior officer development device.
6. Place greater emphasis on GS-15 candidate development.
7. Place greater emphasis on the Individual Development Plan for candidates and SIS officers.
8. Appoint counsellors for GS-15 candidates.
9. Consider reinstituting the SISAC to review and recommend policy changes.

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)				
Assessment of the Senior Intelligence Service				
FROM:		EXTENSION		NO.
[Redacted]		STATINTL		
Chief, SIS Support Staff				DATE
1006 Ames				STATINTL
TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
	RECEIVED	FORWARDED		
1. DD/PA&E 1006 Ames			B	For what its worth -- the attached thoughts and comments are reflections of my experience with the SIS.
2.				
3. DD/OP 5E58 Hqs.			A	These comments are intended in a constructive sense and to a large extent who the feelings of the membership -- or at least the more vocal members that I have had contact with.
4.				
5.				[Redacted] STATINTL
6.				
7. D/OP	- Does pger, some food for further discussions Some items on which we can have differing opinions		3-7	Walt makes some good points. I also sense a level of dissatisfaction among the troops that may be deeper than just pay. Pete
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